

News from Rep. Stephanie Herseth
For Immediate Release
Contact: Russ Levsen, 202-226-4449

**HERSETH ANNOUNCES COMMITTEE HEARING ON BLUNT
RESERVOIR LEGISLATION**

**Herseth Bill Would Allow South Dakota Lease Holders to Buy Back
Land from Federal Government**

February 2, 2006, Washington, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Stephanie
Herseth today announced an oversight hearing on her bill to allow certain
private South Dakota lease holders to buy back up to 13,775 acres of land
from the federal government. The House Resources Subcommittee on
Water and Power will hold a hearing on February 8th to consider the Blunt
Reservoir and Pierre Canal Land Conveyance Act of 2005, which was
introduced by Rep. Herseth on November 11, 2005.

The bill was crafted in response to a now defunct irrigation plan, authorized
in the Flood Control Act of 1944. That authorization led the Bureau of
Reclamation to acquire approximately 19,000 acres in Hughes and Sully
Counties before the project was abandoned in 1977. Today, many of the
original landowners and their descendants continue to lease the land from
the federal government as preferential lease holders. Herseth's bill would
give the preferential lease holders, who now use almost 13,775 acres, the
opportunity to buy back the land.

Herseth, who is a member of the Resources Committee, said, "I am
pleased that we are seeing some movement on this bill, which will allow for
more private land ownership in South Dakota. There is no good reason for

the federal government to continue to own these acres, as the irrigation project for which they were acquired has long since been abandoned. Giving these South Dakotans the opportunity to buy back their land is the right thing to do."

Identical legislation was introduced last Congress but this is the first time a House committee has held a hearing to consider the proposal.

The bill would also transfer 5,462 acres of non-preferentially-leased lands and unleased lands to the South Dakota Department of Game Fish and Parks. The transfer will support the State's plan to restore wildlife habitat that was lost due to the construction of the Missouri River dams.

Herseth added, "This bill is clearly a win-win proposal, and it will have a positive impact on private property rights, the local tax-base and wildlife mitigation. I am optimistic that this bill will gain passage from committee and will be voted on before the full House."

Darla Pollman-Rogers, a lawyer represents the preferential lease holders, is scheduled to testify in support of the legislation. South Dakota Department of Game Fish and Parks Secretary John Cooper will accompany her.

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